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Public Safety, Local Government Leaders File Ballot Measure to Constitutionally Protect Funding for Realignment of Local Services

November 2012 statewide initiative would prevent legislature from raiding or redirecting existing revenues that currently fund realigned public safety and other local services

Sacramento – Today, a coalition of sheriffs, public safety officials and local government leaders filed the Local Taxpayers, Public Safety and Local Services Protection Act of 2012 with the California Attorney General’s office. This statewide constitutional amendment, aimed for the November 2012 ballot, would protect existing revenues that are currently dedicated to fund public safety and other local services that were shifted to counties and local governments as part of the 2011 “realignment” legislation. The measure would prohibit the State from raiding or redirecting these funds in the future, and prohibit the legislature from shifting more responsibility to local governments unless the state provides funding to pay for the services.

Coalition members said they filed this measure today to ensure that voters would get the chance to protect local funding for local services next November, and that they will continue to work with the Administration and other partners on other potential alternative measures to protect local funding.

“Counties are willing and ready to take on the new responsibilities of providing law enforcement and other vital local services that were recently shifted to local governments,” said Yolo County Supervisor Mike McGowan, incoming president of the California State Association of Counties. “But in order to adequately provide these vital services, counties and local governments have to be provided adequate, guaranteed revenues that the State cannot raid, shift or borrow for as long as we are responsible for these programs. We know voters support local control and support the protection of revenues for local services. We look forward to placing a measure on the November 2012 ballot to give voters the opportunity to once again protect their local services.”

“Passing a measure to protect local funding is absolutely vital to protect the public safety and to provide local law enforcement officers the resources we need to take on the added responsibility that was just shifted from the state to local government,” said Merced County Sheriff Mark Pazin, president of the California State Sheriffs’ Association.

“We have to give local law enforcement and probation officers the resources to properly track and monitor the offenders that are now the responsibility of the counties,” said Fresno County Chief Probation Officer Linda Penner, president of the Chief Probation Officers of California. “Local officials cannot do our jobs if we are constantly worried about the State raiding or shifting our local revenues. We have to give local public safety officers the certainty and the tools we need to do our job and keep the public safe.”

The State Legislature recently transferred from state government to counties and other local governments the responsibility for providing a number of public services. These include law enforcement and public safety services, care for neglected seniors and children, mental health and substance abuse recovery programs, and the monitoring, tracking and imprisoning of certain offenders.

However, the State did not provide a protected, ongoing source of guaranteed funding to pay for the delivery of these services. The Local Taxpayers and Public Safety Protection Act:

- ✓ Requires the state to provide counties and local governments with ongoing funding to pay for the cost of providing services that were recently shifted by the State to local government.
- ✓ Dedicates *existing* state revenues, including sales tax and VLF, and does not raise taxes.
- ✓ Prohibits the State Legislature from raiding or redirecting these revenues away from counties and local governments unless the services are shifted back to the State.
- ✓ Prohibits the State from passing any new law or regulation that imposes additional costs on local governments to provide services, unless the State provides ongoing funding to pay for these services.
- ✓ Requires all revenues from this measure be subject to annual, independent audits by the State Controller to ensure that they will be used only for local public safety and other local services.

The coalition expects to receive the ballot title and summary in mid-December, at which point signature gathering process can begin.

“We look forward to working with the Governor and other leaders to make the implementation of realignment a success,” continued Paul McIntosh, executive director, California State Association of Counties. “The success of this historic shift to local control is dependent upon the passage of a constitutional amendment to make sure that local governments have the resources to adequately provide law enforcement and other services that are better delivered at the local level.”

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